

Claims:

1. An electronic mail client, comprising:
 - a) a plurality of authoring components, a first of said plurality of authoring components for creating a representation of a document including other than text;
 - b) encoding means for automatically encoding said representations created with said authoring components into an Internet-compatible email message; and
 - c) decoding means for automatically decoding said representations encoded by said encoding means.
2. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said plurality of authoring components include at least one installable component.
3. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said plurality of authoring components includes at least one component selected from the group consisting of a game component, a spreadsheet component, and a graphic editor component.

4. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said plurality of authoring components includes at least one component selected from the group consisting of a database component, a presentation component, and a puzzle component.
5. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said encoding means includes MIME-compatible encoding means.
6. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said encoding means includes means for creating a MIME file and means for creating a multipart MIME message,
each of said authoring component cooperating with said encoding means such that a creation of said MIME file and said multipart MIME message is transparent to a user.
7. An electronic mail client according to claim 6, wherein:
said decoding means includes means for concatenating a multipart MIME message and means for decoding a MIME file,
each of said authoring component cooperating with said decoding means such that a concatenation of said multipart MIME message and said decoding of MIME files is transparent to the user.

8. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, further comprising:

d) a plurality of installable mailbox/browser components, each of said mailbox/browser components displaying different types of documents in a user's mailbox.

9. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, further comprising:

d) a plurality of installable mailbox/browser components, each of said mailbox/browser components displaying mailbox contents in a different style.

10. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:

 said encoding means and said decoding means communicate bidirectionally with said authoring components.

11. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:

 at least one of said authoring components includes means for recognizing whether a user is an author or a reader and for responding differently to authors and readers.

12. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:

 at least one of said authoring components includes means for allowing a user to create a read-only document.

13. An electronic mail client for a student and a teacher, comprising:

- a) a plurality of authoring components, a first of said plurality of authoring components for creating a representation of a text document and a second of said plurality of authoring components for creating a representation of a document including other than text;
- b) encoding means for automatically encoding representations created with said authoring components into an email message; and
- c) decoding means for automatically decoding said representations encoded with said encoding means, wherein at least one of said authoring components includes means for determining whether the user is the student or the teacher.

14. An electronic mail client according to claim 13, wherein:

 said plurality of authoring components include at least one installable component.

15. An electronic mail client according to claim 13, wherein:

 said plurality of authoring components includes at least one component selected from the group consisting of a game component, a workbook component, and a graphic editor component.

16. An electronic mail client according to claim 13, wherein:
said plurality of authoring components includes at least one component selected from the group consisting of a database component, a presentation component, and a puzzle component.

17. An electronic mail client according to claim 13, wherein:
said encoding means includes MIME-compatible encoding means.

18. An electronic mail client according to claim 13, wherein:
said encoding means includes means for creating a MIME file and means for creating a multipart MIME message,
each of said authoring components cooperating with said encoding means such that a creation of said MIME file and said multipart MIME message is transparent to the student and the teacher.

19. An electronic mail client according to claim 18, wherein:
said decoding means includes means for concatenating a multipart MIME message and means for decoding a MIME file,
each of said authoring component cooperating with said decoding means such that a concatenation of said multipart MIME message and said decoding of MIME files is transparent to a user.

20. A method of authoring a document and sending it by electronic mail, said method comprising:

- a) providing a document-authoring component which authors a document other than a plain-text document;
- b) providing a document-encoding component which encodes the document as Internet-compatible email;
- c) linking the document-authoring component with the document-encoding component such that documents generated under said document-authoring component are automatically encoded as Internet-compatible email.

21. A method according to claim 20, wherein:

 said step of providing a document-authoring component includes providing a plurality of document-authoring components, and

 said step of linking includes linking each of said document-authoring components with the document-encoding component.

22. A method according to claim 20, further comprising:

- d) providing a document-decoding component which decodes a received document encoded as Internet-compatible email;
- c) linking the document-authoring component with the document-decoding component such that documents are automatically decoded.

23. A method according to claim 20, wherein:

the document-encoding component includes means for creating a MIME file and means for creating a multipart MIME message.

24. A method according to claim 22, wherein:

the document-decoding component includes means for concatenating a multipart MIME message and means for decoding a MIME file.